The Masai kraal, an African mud hut, fascinated the children who toured the Global Village.

"How many people do you think we can fit aboard this boat?" asks Andy Giles, a junior psychology major at La Sierra University. He repeats the numbers the eager sixth graders shout out. "Twenty-three? A hundred and twenty-five? Fifty? Actually," he tells them, "It's about two hundred."

Andy and the kids are crowded into a rusted-out Asian refugee boat, one of nine third-world habitats constructed by Hollywood set designers at La Sierra University, in Riverside, California, for Global Village '92, a two-week exhibit depicting life in parts of the world where survival is a daily challenge.

"And when they get to the new country," Andy continues, "what do you think happens to them?" By now the children are a little more reflective. "Does the new country just tell them, 'Come on in; live with us'? Most of the time, they go right back to where they came from or they go into a refugee camp like that one over there." Andy points to the half-dozen tents nestled together under a tree. "Why do you think they try to leave their country?" He waits; a couple of children venture tentatively, "Freedom?"

That's right. Freedom from their governments. Would you like to see a real refugee? Look up in the front of the boat." The wide-eyed children turn around in the tight 20-foot boat and see Myhan Tran sitting atop the bow. "Hi. My name is Myhan. When I was seven years old I came in one of these boats from Vietnam to Malaysia." She speaks with a slight accent. "Our voyage took seven days. We were very lucky because a lot of people usually die. We stayed in a refugee camp after that, waiting for our papers. We didn't have anything. We left our country because of the communists after the fall of Saigon in 1975. You should be thankful for what you have."

Myhan, Andy, and the elementary school students in their group got a chance to travel without leaving the United States. La Sierra University's campus mall became part of the third world this past October; a multi-national village in the middle of Southern California.
College Kids Living in Poverty Become Rich in Understanding

By Heather Miller and Allyson Bennett

A La Sierra University student takes class on a tour of an African refugee camp.

The class on that boat was just one of more than 350 classes from approximately 70 schools to visit Global Village between October 22 and 30. More than 20,000 people toured the village habitats and auxiliary exhibits, some 15,000 of them Southern California school children.

Sponsored by ADRA (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) International, and the La Sierra University Stahl Center for World Service, the purpose of Global Village '92 was to teach children, young and old, about another world they know very little about; to open the minds of the visitors to the great needs of people in other parts of the world.

Habitat exhibits included a southeast Asian stilt house; an Asian refugee boat; a Masai kraal or mud hut; an African refugee camp; an African outdoor school; a totora reed hut like those on the floating islands of Peru's Lake Titicaca; a Brazilian favela, made from cardboard and other pieces of junk; a Philadelphia tenement building; and a North American homeless environment. The months of behind-the-scenes research and preparation came together in this one-of-a-kind learning exhibit, complete with llamas, goats, chickens, and potbellied pigs.

For Charles Teel, La Sierra University religion professor and Stahl Center director, Global Village began more than a year earlier. On a service trip to Peru with university students, he saw the enlightening effect that sleeping in a floating hut, on reed mats, had on his students. Though he knew it would be impossible to take every university student to Peru, why couldn't the third world be brought to the university? Ray Tetz, vice president for communication and development at ADRA International, happened to be a member of the group. With the enthusiasm of these two men and backing from ADRA and La Sierra, the research phase of the project began.

Once the specific exhibit structures were chosen, ADRA provided detailed information on authentic building materials and dimensions, gleaned from its field work in almost 100 countries. Casey Bahr, Global Village producer, then contacted Teri Whittaker, a set designer in Hollywood with extensive film and television experience. She and her crew did further research and drew up plans for habitats that would be strong enough to be safely exhibited for school groups and authentically built, but with materials easily available in the United States. For example, because the reeds for the Peruvian dwellings were hard to obtain, the sides were woven of broom materials purchased from a local factory.

During the summer of 1992, a group of future Global Village student guides participated in a two-week training seminar. To prepare for their October jobs, they attended lectures and films, took trips to ethnic locales in the Los
All visiting students were given the opportunity to pack a box of clothes and personal items for Somalia.

Angeles area and Mexico, and received training for conducting tours of the village.

In September, construction began. Whittaker and her crew, with the aid of volunteers—La Sierra students and faculty, community members, and ex-gang members from Los Angeles—built the structures in sections, doing most of the work by hand, and then transporting them to the display area for assembly. Next, the exhibits were “dressed” with finishing touches: appropriate furniture, tools and clothing, fences for animals, and signs identifying and describing each dwelling. On October 21, the animals arrived and were settled in for the October 22 press conference and first day of tours.

In addition to the pre-event publicity, Global Village received extensive media coverage on opening day and throughout the event. ABC, CNN, and local cable stations sent reporters to the opening ceremonies to film the habitats and to interview children as they finished their tours of the village. Other networks and stations, including NBC’s Today Show, featured stories on the event. The October 25 issue of the Los Angeles Times introduced its readers to Global Village habitats in a full-page article in the real estate section. La

Sierra’s local paper, the Riverside Press-Enterprise, ran three articles on Global Village: two in early October with construction photos, and a later article exploring the impact the exhibit had had on participants and visitors. The San Bernardino Sun, the Orlando (Florida) Sentinel, and the Pacific Union Recorder all ran articles on Global Village.

For Myhan, Andy, and several dozen other La Sierra students, the guided tours were not their only involvement with the village. For them, the habitats became their homes during Global Village. Students slept and ate in the habitats and did their homework there.

A rainy day at the African refugee camp.
Another group of children stands among the tents of the African refugee camp as a La Sierra student guide talks about refugees. "Do you know where most of the refugees are in the world? Most of them are in Africa. When they leave their homes, they have to take what they can carry. They can't call the U-Haul truck."

The guide tells the children to look inside and see what it's like. "They make their tents out of whatever they can find," she explains. Dirty brown and gray burlap, scraps of car flooring, and blankets cover the flimsy structures; cardboard pieces create a floor for the tents.

"Last night I stayed in one of these tents," the guide says, "and it was raining. I got wet. What would you do to keep warm and dry if you were in a tent with holes like this?"

Turning to another station, some 35 touring children take their seats on the purple, orange, and yellow benches of the African outdoor school. Janet Weighall, La Sierra University modern language teacher, has been manning this station.

"Good morning!" she enthusiastically exclaims. "Jambo! Jambo means 'welcome' in Swahili. That's the language students who go to a school like this speak in some countries in Africa. In Africa, most of the school kids wear uniforms to school. The Maasai like red and a lot of times the uniforms are bright red."

"What did you have for breakfast this morning?" she asks. A chorus of "Cereal!" is heard. "Guess what the African children ate for breakfast—ugali! That's like cornmeal mush, only hard and dry. You slice it. Know what they had for lunch? Ugali! Know what the will have for supper? Ugali!" Thirty-five young voices join Janet's for that one.

But Global Village was not limited to third-world habitats in other countries. Two of the exhibits were North American—a Philadelphia tenement house and an old car that represented "home" for a homeless family.

Cindy Donaldson, junior elementary education major, takes a group of 45 second and third graders through the alley of the tenement and warehouse building. It is spray painted with the colorful graffiti "tagging" of real gang members from Los Angeles. Children step on an old tire to peer into the half-boarded window that looks in on a basement room. One mattress lies on the cement floor; a sink, a small pile of clothes, and last night's supper remains.
You have experiences now to connect with those images you see. I think you're going to pay more attention. When people tell you, 'I was born in a stilt house,' or 'I came here on a refugee boat,' all of a sudden you connect them with this boat and their experiences, and you realize that all of us around here are carrying these experiences with us."

Kulreet is one of the many La Sierra students whose own world view has been confronted. "When it rained, we had to think, 'Where are our resources? What do we have here? What can we do to keep warm?' And you start thinking, Given these resources, what can we do? It's like the fact that they have something from America, the tenement, because it puts life into perspective. Just like if you go down to Tijuana and see the favelas, something we may never have thought about before. When we had an electrical storm, we got kicked out of the village. We were totally wet. We went..."
back to the dorm, and I said, 'I don't have dry clothes. Does anybody have any clothes?' All of a sudden, I thought, 'Oh, my! We're like the refugees!' We were totally dependent on other people.

Global Village was a time for students to gain appreciation and understanding about the rest of the world. The exhibits and displays have already spread a message of acceptance and understanding to thousands in Southern California, and to hundreds of thousands more through media coverage of the event. In the interest of reaching still more people, the event's producers are investigating ways to make Global Village available to other college campuses and organizations. As Charles Teel said at the opening-day ceremonies, "We are at once reminded of our parochiality and privilege. May our parochiality be challenged, our privilege recognized as but an accident of birth."